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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 41st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MONGBE (Benin)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 91: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(g) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (continued)

Draft resolution on human settlements (A/C.2/48/L.37)

1. Mr. JARAMILLO (Colombia) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. He noted with concern that insufficient attention to human settlements had resulted in the continuing deterioration of the quality of both urban and rural life. The sponsors hoped the resolution would be adopted by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 99: IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)

Draft resolution on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (A/C.2/48/L.38)

2. Mr. JARAMILLO (Colombia) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and expressed the hope that it would adopted by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 100: SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (continued)

Draft resolution on assistance to Yemen (A/C.2/48/L.29)

3. Mr. AL-HARTHY (Oman), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the United States of America, Yemen and Oman, said that its aim was to continue the implementation of previous General Assembly resolutions on assistance to Yemen at a critical economic and social juncture for the country. The sponsors hoped the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution on international assistance to Sierra Leone (A/C.2/48/L.31)

Draft resolution on assistance for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Liberia (A/C.2/48/L.32)

Draft resolution on emergency assistance to the Sudan (A/C.2/48/L.39)

Draft resolution on assistance for humanitarian relief and the economic and social rehabilitation of Somalia (A/C.2/48/L.40)

4. Mr. BELHIMEUR (Algeria), introducing draft resolutions A/C.2/48/L.31, L.32, L.39 and L.40, on behalf of their respective sponsors, said that natural disaster and armed conflict had severely damaged the economic and social infrastructure of the African countries in question, affected the neighbouring countries and forced thousands of people to become refugees. The draft resolution on Liberia mentioned the signing of the peace agreement at Cotonou, intended to launch the processes of national reconciliation and economic rehabilitation. All the draft resolutions expressed appreciation to the international community for the humanitarian assistance provided thus far and

(Mr. Belhimeur, Algeria)

urgently appealed for its continuation, and the sponsors hoped that they would be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution on assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon (A/C.2/48/L.30)

5. Mr. MAHMOUD (Lebanon), introducing the draft resolution, said that its formulation was deliberately simple and left it to the Committee to decide on how the assistance should be implemented. He expressed the hope that the draft resolution would be adopted without a vote.

AGENDA ITEM 101: INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE ECONOMIC REHABILITATION OF ANGOLA (continued)

Draft resolution on international assistance for the economic rehabilitation of Angola (A/C.2/48/L.36)

6. Mr. COSTA (Brazil), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, said that it built upon and updated General Assembly resolution 47/164. He expressed the hope that national reconciliation would be achieved under the Peace Accords for Angola, thereby paving the way for economic and social rehabilitation. The draft resolution called upon the international community to renew its commitment to providing material, technical and financial assistance to that end. The sponsors hoped the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 93: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (A/48/182, A/48/272-S/26108, A/48/291-S/26242, A/48/338, A/48/353-S/26372, A/48/359, A/48/484, A/48/485, A/48/545, A/48/564; A/C.2/48/4)

7. Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation for the eradication of poverty in developing countries (A/48/545), said that for many years, national development officials had had to choose between a welfare-oriented focus, which specifically targeted the poor, and the broader approach of improving opportunities for the poor to pursue their own advancement. The latter option encompassed every sphere of development. Thus far, the willingness of the poor to invest in their own advancement had been underestimated and yet it was a crucial factor. Of course, social safety nets and welfare-oriented activities would continue to be necessary for those who were still unable to take advantage of the new opportunities to participate in development strategies.

8. The report of the Secretary-General outlined three broad areas of activities. The first area of activities was strengthening upstream capacities, including not only data collection and analysis but also the redesigning of planning methods. In doing so, the concerns of the poor would have to be taken more fully into account in development strategies. The second area of activities was new partnerships to promote an integrated and participatory approach. Increasingly, the necessity of decentralization and cooperation with non-governmental organizations, local authorities and community organizations

(Mr. Desai)

had come to be understood. The third area of activities was resource mobilization for poverty-oriented activities, in other words, real investment in those assets the poor would exploit for their own advancement. The report covered only field activities in technical cooperation conducted by the United Nations system in order to increase national capacity in those three broad areas. It was hoped that the debate during the current session of the General Assembly and the preparatory process for the World Summit for Social Development would give focus and structure to the various United Nations poverty alleviation funds, programmes, organizations and agencies by the time the Summit was convened.

9. Mr. MONTOYA (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, noted that poverty was increasing in the developed countries as a result of unemployment and social imbalances and that it was also increasing in the economies in transition. Nowhere, however, was the situation more urgent than in the developing countries. The slowdown of the world economy had aggravated unequal income distribution, not only between rich countries and poor countries but also between rich persons and poor persons within each country.

10. The implementation of social policies and programmes in the developing countries was being hampered by limited resources and the diminishing role of the State. Meanwhile, unemployment was on the rise while wages were decreasing in real terms. Almost all the cities of the developing countries had become pockets of poverty, characterized by overcrowding, scarcity of water and inadequate services. A child born in a developing country was five times more likely to die in its first year of life than one born in a developed country. The main causes were malnutrition and inadequate health care. In the third world, 1.5 billion people still had no access to basic health care and 800 million people suffered from malnutrition at a time when world food production was sufficient to feed the global population. Whereas in the third world, lack of buying power was the cause of malnutrition, in the developed countries, malnutrition was associated with excessive consumption. Of the 1 billion illiterate persons in the world, 97 per cent were in developing countries. For every $100 that industrialized countries spent on education per capita, the countries of the South spent barely $4.

11. Poverty, hunger and lack of opportunity gave rise to continued migration from the third world to developed countries, where immigrants were subjected to xenophobia and open hostility. Poverty was also the main cause of many of the civil wars and social conflicts that forced millions of persons to become refugees. While the United Nations mobilized considerable resources to resolve military and ethnic conflicts in the post cold-war era, policies and mechanisms to help the world's poor - whose numbers would rise to 1.3 billion by the year 2000 - were still lacking.

12. Reducing unemployment was essential in order to decrease poverty and yet developing countries would have to grow at an annual rate of 8 or 9 per cent in order to provide sufficient jobs for their labour force. That growth could be achieved only in an international environment that encouraged the expansion of trade, the opening up of markets, increased capital flows and the transfer of

(Mr. Montoya, Colombia)

technology and expertise to developing countries. To that end, the developed countries must remove barriers to the free and transparent functioning of international markets.

13. Poverty reduction also required the fulfilment of commitments regarding official development assistance. Chapter 3 of Agenda 21 must be fully implemented in order to attain the objectives of sustainable development. The United Nations must strengthen its economic and technical cooperation and human resources programmes for poverty-stricken countries. The Group of 77 would submit draft resolutions containing specific proposals in that regard to the General Assembly at its current session.

14. Mr. VAN DE CRAEN (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the 12 States members of the European Union, referred to their recent observance of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. He noted that extreme poverty was a threat to persons in very poor and very affluent societies alike, that it was aggravated at times of crisis and unrest, and that it usually spelled exclusion from social, political and economic life. In recent years the United Nations system had devoted increasing attention to the eradication of poverty. The report of the Secretary-General gave a full description of the work of the specialized agencies and of the Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the working group on poverty alleviation of the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCSQ (OPS)). In most other respects, however, it was somewhat disappointing. For example, it contained very little information on activities for the eradication of extreme poverty or on the cooperation of the United Nations system with intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The description of the poverty alleviation policies, priorities and strategies of developing countries themselves was vague at best. Future reports should provide more information.

15. The European Union noted with interest the "20/20" option advocated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), whereby donors would allocate 20 per cent of their development assistance and developing countries, 20 per cent of their domestic budgetary expenditure, to human development priorities, including the eradication of poverty. Resources made available under the "20/20" option should be used to improve health care; basic education, particularly for women; access to drinking water; family planning; and rural credit schemes. The European Union supported the approach taken by bilateral, regional and multilateral donors which increasingly linked cooperation for development to adjustment and restructuring programmes but did not overlook the social dimension. In particular, it welcomed the initiative of the World Bank, whose poverty alleviation strategy was based on economic growth and investment in human capital but included a social dimension as well. It hoped that regional development banks would take the same approach.

16. A disproportionate share of the burden of adjustment was borne by those groups which had little or no political or economic clout, particularly in the rural areas. Social safety nets could help mitigate the negative consequences of adjustment; however, the results thus far, particularly in sub-Saharan

(Mr. Van De Craen, Belgium)

Africa, had not been very encouraging. That made it more difficult for countries implementing adjustment programmes to obtain new flows of financial resources, creating a sort of vicious cycle.

17. The first step in poverty alleviation was to increase access to employment. Government, intergovernmental and non-governmental donors had an important role to play in that respect. The eradication of poverty was a primary objective of the cooperation for development policy of the European Union. The Union looked forward to the discussion of the issue in a broader context at the World Summit for Social Development but, at the same time, believed that it must be accorded greater priority in the national policies of developing countries.

18. If poverty alleviation policies, particularly in developing countries, were to be successful, it would be necessary to expand the scope of reform and adjustment programmes in order to create an incentive for private investment and entrepreneurship in general; publicize success stories more widely; adapt the scope, content and pace of adjustment to the circumstances of each country; and recognize that poverty was both a cause and a consequence of environmental deterioration. In addition, population policy must be compatible with sustainable development, and sufficient external financial support must be provided and earmarked for activities that responded to genuine needs. Lastly, the success of adjustment policies and their social dimension depended primarily on mobilizing local populations and authorities.

19. Mr. PALACIOS ALCOCER (Mexico) said that the fight against poverty had become one of the fundamental goals of economic development. The adoption of effective national development policies that took into consideration the needs of the population would make it possible to improve the standard of living of millions of the world's poor.

20. Mexico was currently carrying out an accelerated process of reform, adjustment and modernization in order to stimulate its economy and increase its competitiveness. At the same time, it had sought to strengthen democracy and social justice and improve its standard of living. Mexico's social policy was based on the National Solidarity Programme, whose principal goal was to combat poverty by developing the productive capacity of the most disadvantaged sectors of society and promoting a better distribution of the country's income and wealth. The Programme fostered community participation and the formation of local Solidarity Committees. More than 150,000 such Committees had been established throughout the country.

21. Solidarity had received the social and economic benefits of Mexico's adjustment programme. Mexico had carried out sweeping educational reforms in order to help its population meet the increasing demand for trained personnel. The health sector had benefited from various programmes that sought to improve health facilities throughout the entire country. Over the past five years, a new hospital had been opened every three weeks and a primary health care unit had been opened every day. Solidarity's credit programme in 1,620 municipalities assisted more than 1 million farmers.

(Mr. Palacios Alcocer, Mexico)

22. Mexico had elaborated policies that promoted economic growth while protecting the environment. It had taken measures to control industrial pollution, and had inaugurated the Productive Ecology Programme, which would help prevent the erosion of arable land. The goal of the Solidarity Forest Project was to plant 100 million trees.

23. Mexico's new social policy had led to the creation of the Department for Social Development in May 1992. During the past five years, the Mexican Government had invested over 37 billion new pesos in Solidarity and social spending had risen by 85 per cent in real terms, which had led to an 11-per-cent increase in average per capita income. Mexico owed the success of its social policy not only to increased social spending but also to greater community participation, with assistance from State and municipal governments and non-governmental organizations.

24. Ms. ULLOA (Ecuador) said that, in the developing countries, the poor did not have access to good education or a good diet, and Governments should take measures to educate and feed their people. That was the only way out of underdevelopment.

25. While there was much talk of free trade, the developing countries were having to contend with harsh economic measures, unjust terms of trade, the insufficient transfer of resources to their weak economies and growing external debt. It was difficult for them to make development plans since their efforts to achieve economic stability were thwarted by the international economic environment.

26. The international community should take measures to combat poverty, first of all for moral reasons, since the conscience of mankind could not tolerate the existence of 1.5 billion poor; secondly, for demographic reasons, since population growth continued to be one of the principal causes for the persistence of poverty; thirdly, for ecological reasons, since poverty led to environmental degradation; and, lastly, for political reasons, since poverty jeopardized national and international stability.

27. Mr. BIAOU (Benin) said that, in its activities and programmes to combat poverty, the United Nations should take into account the relevant decisions and recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in particular chapter 3 of Agenda 21. It should aim to halve the number of people living in poverty by the first quarter of the twenty-first century, and to eradicate poverty completely by the year 2050. That strategy for the eradication of poverty should be carefully examined. Chapter 3 of Agenda 21 contained no calendar and set no deadlines for the attainment of objectives in efforts to combat poverty. That omission should be remedied.

28. At the conceptual level, it was generally acknowledged that the eradication of poverty called for two basic approaches: job creation and increased family income, and the provision of basic social services and the improvement of food-security and national capacity-building programmes. In order to be effective, those two approaches should be implemented simultaneously, which called for the integration of national strategies and policies for the eradication of poverty

(Mr. Biaou, Benin)

into national development plans and programmes. His delegation was pleased that 89 developing countries had already adopted national programmes of action to achieve the goals of the World Summit for Children, in particular the eradication or reduction of the worst cases of poverty by the year 2000.

29. Before the end of the 1990s, it was essential to take measures to eliminate poverty and promote sustainable patterns of production and consumption. As long as poverty remained endemic in certain areas and regions the world would remain prone to social crises and environmental degradation. International cooperation and solidarity were essential for achieving the fundamental goal of improving living and working conditions for human beings in all parts of the world.

30. Mr. MOMEN (Bangladesh) said that limited resources, high rates of population growth, restricted market access for exports, overdependence on agriculture, and national disasters helped swell the ranks of the poor in the developing countries. The eradication of poverty called for increased domestic savings, investment in productive sectors, economic diversification and the creation of a favourable international environment.

31. The Government of Bangladesh had taken measures to increase domestic savings and encourage investment in productive sectors. It provided special incentives for investment in remote and underdeveloped areas, and its development plans gave priority to agriculture, health, education and family planning. Thanks to a variety of incentives access of the disadvantaged to food had greatly improved. Bangladesh had established a food security system to meet emergencies, and had adopted a programme to provide basic nutrients - rice and lentils - to the poor.

32. Promotion of off-farm activities and small industrial projects in rural areas should receive high priority in any poverty alleviation strategy. Bangladesh had concentrated its efforts on setting up small labour-intensive industries in rural areas and encouraging both the private and public sector to provide credits on very easy terms to landless and marginal farmers. Some local non-governmental organizations, such as the Grameen Bank, had focused on providing loans to landless and destitute village women, who had successfully set up cottage industries or small businesses.

33. The arduous task of reducing poverty should be accompanied by institutional restructuring and decentralized participatory planning to bring the poor and disadvantaged into the centre of development programmes. A favourable external environment was essential for the success of social and economic programmes in developing countries, and a significant increase in the net transfer of resources, the elimination of trade barriers, the growth of export earnings and a durable solution to the debt crisis of the developing countries were crucial in that regard.

34. Mr. OLANIYAN (Observer for the Organization of African Unity (OAU)) said that, over the years, OAU had played a major role in efforts to find lasting solutions to the problem of poverty in Africa. It had established a commission to provide for the immediate and long-term material and financial needs of refugees, including shelter, food, education and steady employment. It had also helped disaster victims become productive members of society by providing them with food, health, shelter, sanitation and income-generating opportunities. In addition, OAU was currently establishing a mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution.

35. However, the long-term strategy for the eradication of poverty in Africa was to be found in the context of the African Economic Community, which sought to complement national and subregional efforts to promote economic growth and sustainable development in Africa. Its principal objectives included the promotion of industrial and agricultural development, the development of infrastructure and the enhancement of human development. The African Economic Community would provide a framework in which the economic growth and development of small African economies could be meaningfully promoted.

36. OAU welcomed the efforts of the international community to alleviate poverty in the developing countries. Resource mobilization for poverty-oriented activities was a step in the right direction. The OAU International Conference on Assistance to Africa's Children had called on African Governments to devote a minimum of 20 per cent of their domestic budgetary expenditure to human development priorities and urged donor countries to allocate a minimum of 20 per cent of their official development assistance (ODA) to the same priorities. Other strategies, such as the strengthening of upstream capacities, including data collection and analysis, and new partnerships to promote an integrated, participatory and inter-agency focus on improved technical cooperation were also very important for the eradication of poverty in Africa. The United Nations should intensify its efforts in all those areas.

37. The number of poor in Africa was likely to increase during the current decade, underscoring the need to stimulate growth with investments in health and education. Adjustments might not be enough to bring about substantial changes that would benefit the rural poor. A more broad-based rural development required increased investment in rural roads and the development of research and extension services. At the same time, OAU urged the international community to increase its support for measures to alleviate the adverse social effects of structural adjustment programmes in Africa.

38. Poverty in Africa was intricately linked to the environment. Rainfall generally occurred in erosive downpours, and the pressure on vegetation was greater than in temperate areas. Outside the humid zones, rainfall varied greatly from year to year, and two thirds of Africa's land area faced high or very high risk of drought. OAU welcomed the Organization's efforts to help the African countries cope with agricultural, drought and erosion problems. Such support should be intensified as part of the multifaceted approach to eradicating poverty in Africa.

39. In order to reduce poverty in Africa, the external debt of African countries should be more effectively addressed. In 1992, debt-servicing

(Mr. Olaniyan, Observer, OAU)

accounted for about 30 per cent of Africa's export earnings, considerably reducing the capacity of African countries to finance internal development. OAU welcomed the various global initiatives on debt-relief measures which had provided temporary relief to a few African debtor countries. They should be reviewed in order to ensure that they provided more relief to all low-income and middle-income heavily indebted African countries.

40. Mrs. AMERASEKARE (Sri Lanka) said that, agreements adopted by the international community to alleviate poverty notwithstanding, one fifth of the world's population lived in poverty owing to the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities within and among nations. Greater equity in income or resource distribution and human resources development were prerequisites for the success of any poverty alleviation strategy. Country-specific approaches bolstered by international efforts and a supportive external economic environment also were crucial. Innovative policies calling for direct intervention were needed. The member countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation had agreed on an agenda of action to combat poverty which focused on the empowerment of the poor, decentralized agricultural development, labour-intensive industrial development, human resources development, including the enhancement of the role of women, and the provision of education, health care and shelter. That agenda could provide a useful framework for action in other regions.

41. Developing countries lacked the resources for poverty alleviation programmes. It was the responsibility of the international community to provide the required resources through aid, debt relief and an open and equitable trading system. Given the current decline in aid and the deadlock in the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations, the importance of debt-relief measures could not be overemphasized. A renewed North-South dialogue also was extremely important.

42. An anti-poverty strategy was vital, for unless due account was taken of those who depended on natural resources for their livelihood, efforts to protect the environment were bound to fail. Priority should be given to poverty alleviation in the allocation of official development assistance (ODA). The emphasis placed by national Governments and bilateral and multilateral funding agencies on poverty alleviation should be regularly assessed.

43. Mr. ACHARYA (Nepal) noted that all least developed countries and some developing countries suffered from abject poverty. The end of the cold war opened new opportunities for economic cooperation for a better future for all. Poverty was a threat to peace and must be attacked at its roots.

44. His delegation was encouraged to note the trends in international cooperation for the eradication of poverty in developing countries described in the report by the Secretary-General on the item (A/48/545). It welcomed the recognition of the need for a multisectoral, coordinated response, and for a two-pronged approach focusing on employment creation and the increase of household income, on the one hand, and provision of basic human services on the other. His delegation also favoured the creation of social safety nets, in particular in the least developed countries.

(Mr. Acharya, Nepal)

45. The Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation of UNCTAD should be made more effective. In addition to strengthening its data collection and analytical capabilities, the Standing Committee should coordinate the efforts of various groups and teams dealing with poverty issues.

46. Despite the fact that his country was one of the poorest, lacked natural resources and was handicapped by its geophysical situation, its newly elected democratic Government had made poverty alleviation the top priority of its national development programme. His country required international support and believed that the United Nations system should speedily formulate and effectively implement programmes aimed at poverty alleviation.

47. Mr. KRAGHOLM (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, expressed regret at the late issuance of the report of the Secretary-General on the item under consideration (A/48/545), which had made preparations for the debate somewhat difficult.

48. Alleviating poverty in the developing countries should be a top priority of the international community. Poverty statistics were alarming and showed that the situation was worsening. What was lacking was the political commitment to reallocate resources effectively to alleviate poverty.

49. Governments bore the main responsibility for establishing an environment conducive to combating poverty. They must promote economic growth and employment opportunities for both men and women. Investment in people was a prerequisite for economic development, and investments in basic social services not only helped reduce human suffering, but also enhanced the productivity of labour and stimulated economic growth. The rural poor should be given access to land. Policies concerning women also must be integrated in such key areas as education, reproductive health, agricultural services, credit and income opportunities. The poor, including poor women, must be able to participate actively in the decision-making process in society.

50. Three quarters of the poor in developing countries lived in ecologically fragile areas. Decisive and concerted action must be taken to break the vicious cycle of poverty, population pressure and environmental degradation. Sustainable development, including poverty alleviation, was enhanced by democracy, good governance and public participation. The resources freed by the decline in military expenditures should be used to combat poverty, particularly in developing countries; in that connection he welcomed the "20/20" concept relating to human development expenditures referred to in paragraph 47 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/48/545).

51. The international community should improve market access for products from developing countries, and should contribute to the establishment of an environment which encouraged private sector development and small- and medium-sized industries. It was urgent that the international community make genuine efforts to reach the target of 0.7 per cent of GNP for development assistance and 0.15 per cent for the least developed countries.

(Mr. Kragholm, Denmark)

52. Lastly, he welcomed and encouraged the coordinated efforts described in the report to develop tools for poverty alleviation at the national level. The concept of human development, including poverty alleviation, should be duly reflected in the preparations for, the deliberations during and the outcomes of the forthcoming International Conference on Population and Development, the World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development.

53. Ms. ZHANG Xiaoan (China) cited shocking statistics which indicated that, unless the problem of massive poverty was solved, it would be difficult for people to participate actively in development in any meaningful way or to share equitably in the benefits gained. The eradication of poverty in the developing countries must be a priority development objective for the 1990s and a priority for internaticnal cooperation.

54. The experience gained in that area in developing countries, including China, underscored the importance of economic growth and development in efforts to eradicate poverty and the need for an integrated approach and comprehensive development and management measures. Developing countries' efforts must be complemented by strong support from the international community in terms of increased levels of official development assistance, financial flows and technology transfers, improved terms of trade and greater debt relief. International financial institutions should continue to attach high priority to the eradication of poverty. Furthermore, the relevant organs of the United Nations system, which had a comparative advantage and vast experience in their respective areas of competence, should strengthen their efforts to eradicate poverty in developing countries.

55. Her country, which was the most populous and had the highest number of poor people in the world, had made substantial progress in its efforts to alleviate poverty during the past nine years. Nevertheless, it still faced a daunting task, and the Government was ready to strengthen its cooperation with the United Nations and international financial institutions in a common effort to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development.

56. Mr. SWETJA (Indonesia) said that the challenge of alleviating the scourge of poverty and its attendant manifestations of hunger, malnutrition and disease was formidable. Since the end of the cold war, there had been a welcome increase in international attention to the question of eradicating poverty, despite the exponential rise in the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance and emergency relief. The report of the Secretary-General (A/48/545) rightly pointed out that coordination and implementation of country-specific technical cooperation programmes were primarily the responsibility of recipient countries. He endorsed the recognition in the report of the need for a two-pronged approach to poverty eradication emphasizing employment creation on the one hand and provision of basic human services on the other. The success of such policies was totally contingent on an external environment conducive to sustaining them and to supporting overall national development efforts.

57. The fact that poverty alleviation was a responsibility to be shared by all countries was clearly reflected in the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, the outcome of the eighth session

(Mr. Swetja, Indonesia)

of UNCTAD and Agenda 21 adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The central principles of the Strategy also were reflected in the report of the Secretary-General, including the critical need to promote broad-based people-centred development policies.

58. His country's efforts to eradicate poverty had focused on growth, stability and, in particular, equity. Sustained self-reliance was recognized as pivotal. The necessary infrastructure and support mechanisms were provided, and dramatic results had already been attained.

59. Mr. KAMATH (India) said that the urgency of tackling the problem of poverty and its impact on social and international stability, the environment and sustainable development was underscored by the fact that it was one of the issues to be dealt with in detail at the forthcoming World Summit for Social Development. Efforts to combat poverty required a development strategy combining action to promote economic growth with programmes designed to address specific population categories. In addition to striving to create a favourable international economic climate, it was essential to devise situation-specific approaches to combat the problem of poverty. A complete strategy also must consider the needs of communities and groups that might have been deprived of socio-economic rights and benefits for historical reasons, and must take into account the gender issue, the rights of the child and the needs of youth.

60. Programmes to further such strategies should recognize the right of the poor to food, work, education, good health, shelter and development as fundamental human rights. The right to information as a crucial ingredient for empowerment also was important. Programmes were needed to guarantee a certain level of employment to the rural poor and educated but unemployed rural and urban youth. Integrated women and child development programmes addressing nutritional, educational and health needs, community-based literacy programmes and an alternative market that guaranteed affordable access to basic daily needs also were desirable.

61. His country had pursued such goals through a broad rural employment programme and a far-reaching self-employment programme directed at very small industries and small business enterprises in urban areas. A programme of integrated services for children and an innovative scheme to empower women to gain control over their own resources were being implemented. The people themselves must be involved in the design and implementation of programmes to combat poverty. The poor - women in particular - therefore should be organized, with support from non-governmental organizations.

62. Mr. MSENGEZI (Zimbabwe) said that it was disquieting to note that in some regions poverty was worsening, not improving. During the past decade, poverty had increased in absolute and in relative terms, both in Africa and in Latin America. Africa was the one continent where the number of people living in poverty was projected to increase until the year 2000. The high incidence of poverty was due inter alia to rapid population growth, increasing pressure on limited arable land, inadequate growth of agricultural yields and deteriorating terms of trade, compounded by chronic drought and locust infestation. In

(Mr. Msengezi, Zimbabwe)

addition, economic reforms often had adverse short- to medium-term effects on the supply of social services, employment and income levels, thus aggravating the situation of the poor.

63. His delegation welcomed the integrated approach increasingly adopted by the United Nations system in addressing the problem of poverty. UNDP had identified poverty eradication as one of the six top priority areas during its fifth programming cycle, and the International Labour Organization (ILO) had chosen poverty alleviation as one of the three priority objectives of its work programme for the biennium 1994-1995. His delegation also commended the World Bank for its work on country poverty assessments, which were valuable instruments to national planners charged with the formulation of national poverty alleviation programmes.

64. Special attention should be given to the situation of women, who bore the brunt of poverty particularly in rural areas. Women played a central role in raising children as well as in food production and income generation, and he called on the United Nations system to integrate the needs and priorities of women in its poverty eradication strategies.

65. Mr. COHEN (United States of America) said that while it might not be possible to eradicate poverty completely, the international community must work to alleviate its worst effects. His delegation interpreted international economic cooperation not just as United Nations assistance programmes but as encompassing a whole range of economic interactions both among Governments and within the private sector. With the end of the East-West divide, the General Assembly could look at economic issues in a new way. For that reason, his delegation had sought to shorten the title of the agenda item under consideration to read simply "International cooperation for the eradication of poverty" to reflect the common interests of nations.

66. His Government recognized its obligation to foster an environment conducive to the creation of employment and wealth and the economic empowerment of all sectors of society. Significant reductions in poverty could best be accomplished through the creation of wealth, not simply through its redistribution. The experience of the economies in transition demonstrated that strategies that relied primarily on redistribution led to stagnation. Many developing countries, notably in Asia, had made great advances by adopting policies conducive to sustained economic growth.

67. The United States was determined to conclude the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations to permit continued expansion of international trade opportunities. It was actively engaged in policy dialogue through the international financial institutions and continued to contribute more resources to official development assistance than any other country. In 1994, the United States would enter into the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico. That treaty, the first of its kind to include both developed and developing countries, should raise living standards in all three countries and contribute to the alleviation of poverty in Mexico. It represented a partnership for development through trade, based on mutual benefit and respect.

(Mr. Cohen, United States)

68. The United States was working to rejuvenate its domestic economy and restore balance to its internal and external accounts. It absorbed more developing country exports than any other country, but a stagnant economy could not continue to absorb them at the same rate. If its economy was weak, it could not fulfil its traditional leadership role in maintaining an open world trading system and underwriting a stable international financial system. The United States was prepared to cooperate in drafting a non-confrontational resolution reflecting the new realities all countries faced.

69. Mr. MOHAMED (Sudan) said that poverty was the greatest threat to international peace and security. The democracy to be aspired to should be that of trade and equalization of wealth. The gap between the North and the South was alarming. Developing countries indeed had primary responsibility for their own development, but the international community also had a responsibility to provide an environment conducive to growth through increased financial flows to developing countries, relief of the external debt burden and a balanced world trading system. His Government placed high priority on the eradication of poverty. It had achieved an economic growth rate of 10 per cent and had made policy decisions which had created an environment conducive to external investment.

70. Mrs. SHAHANI (Philippines) said that poverty was a violation of human rights, a threat to peace and an obstacle to sustainable development. Extreme poverty, which forced human beings to devote all their energy to mere survival, deprived human beings of the right to life, dignity, the development of their faculties and freedom. Among the affluent, who had the opportunity for education, conflict was almost always resolved verbally. On the other hand, the poor and illiterate, who had no voice more often resorted to arms. Indeed, poverty was both the source and the result of oppression and conflict.

71. The eradication of poverty was indispensable to sustainable development; the Rio Declaration on environment and development had enshrined that concept in its Principle 5. Efforts to eradicate poverty must, of course, begin with individual countries and Governments. The Philippines had made poverty eradication a major goal of its medium-term development plan. The share of social services and economic services in the national budget each hovered around 20 per cent, while servicing of external debt consumed from 40 to 45 per cent. Accordingly, the international community must work to alleviate the debt burden, improve the international trading environment and promote transfer of technology.

72. Her delegation appreciated the fact that United Nations continued to recognize the importance of the problem of poverty. The Declaration on International Economic Cooperation issued at the Eighteenth Special Session of the General Assembly had recognized that the eradication of poverty was a major challenge of the 1990s. The International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade had also singled it out as a special area of priority, and Agenda 21 had devoted an entire chapter to combating poverty. The United Nations, therefore, had a very important role in marshalling countries to that common task.

73. Mr. SHAARI (Malaysia) said that, for poverty reduction measures to be sustainable, economic growth must be broad-based and must generate income-earning opportunities; in addition, there must be improved access to education, health care and other social services so as to enable the poor to take advantage of those opportunities. While economic growth was critical, it could also be argued that poverty alleviation programmes, if successful, could promote growth, as they expanded the productive capacity of the poor, thus creating effective demand for the next growth cycle. Many East Asian countries, including Malaysia, had been able to reduce drastically the incidence of poverty by facilitating wide participation in the growth process which, in turn, had promoted broad-based economic growth.

74. The real challenge for many developing countries lay in adopting a growth strategy that could generate adequate resources to fund social development infrastructure. Many commodity-dependent economies were caught in a vicious circle whereby investments in commodity production did not generate adequate returns because of falling commodity prices. Thus, it was important to give such basic development issues as debt overhang, weak commodity prices and declining terms of trade proper attention. Structural adjustment measures did not always result in increased capital inflows; while reducing imbalances they raised the incidence of poverty in the process. Without adequate safety nets, poorer population segments would become increasingly vulnerable.

75. An important lesson could be drawn from the experience of some of the East Asian economies: a large proportion of their development budget was targeted towards basic health care and primary education, which benefited the masses. That broad-based approach elicited grass-roots participation and created momentum for growth throughout the population. The people created the progress, while the Government was simply a catalyst. But national efforts in development and poverty eradication were not enough in themselves; the international economic environment must also be conducive to growth. In the face of decreasing flows of direct assistance, it was vital that the global economic system should be as open and fair as possible. The conclusion of the Uruguay Round and the elimination of unfair subsidies and protectionism was of prime concern.

ANNOUNCEMENT CONCERNING SPONSORSHIP OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS

76. The CHAIRMAN announced that France and Spain had become sponsors of draft resolution A/C.2/48/L.24 submitted under agenda item 98.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.